Fisheries Sampling Branch Policies and Practices

Observer Performance Monitoring, Review, Probation and Decertification

<u>Monitoring Data Quality</u> :

The Fisheries Sampling Branch (FSB) holds monthly Data Quality (DQ) meetings to review all aspects of the programs data quality. One of the key elements of these meetings is for the Data Quality Editor and the Data Editors to discuss performance issues for individual observers. Editors will summarize the overall observer data quality, including such things as; submission errors, communications, timeliness, etc. and present these to the DQ group for review and discussion.

If the Data Quality Editor is convinced that there are significant issues with the performance and/or data submitted by an observer, she/he will provide to the Database Manager a written record of the issues and recommend that the individual be monitored for probation. If approved, the Database Manager will refer this finding in writing (E-Mail or letter) to the Observer Contract COTR to ensure that the, Program Manager, NMFS Area Leaders (Northeast and Mid-Atlantic), contractors Area Coordinators, and the Observer are notified of the issues and concerns. If there is no discernable improvement in the observer performance in subsequent DQ meetings, probation will be recommended.

<u>Probation:</u>

An observer will be placed in probationary status when the Database Manager notifies the Branch Chief of the results of the DQ meetings and their recommendations. The Branch Chief will notify the Observer Contract COTR, the Program Manager and the observer of his decision of the probationary action in writing.

Additionally there is the option of an emergency probation action. This action would be invoked if there was reason to believe some egregious violation of procedures or protocols had been committed. This action will be carried out by the Branch Chief following discussions with Data Editors, Data Quality Editors and/or the Database Manager. Again the Branch Chief will notify the Observer Contract COTR, the Program Manager and the observer of his decision in writing.
Typically this is a short term probation pending an investigation as to the nature of the offense and would usually precede decertification.

Once notified that he/she is in probationary status the observer shall cease conducting trips and schedule a debriefing in Woods Hole or other agreed upon location. After debriefing, three trips will be completed, with each trips submissions being completely reviewed and approved before deploying on successive trips. If these three trips are deemed acceptable the observer may continue taking trips in the standard manner but will remain on probationary status for 3 months (or a minimum of 30 observed days). An observer may be kept on probationary status for a longer period of time at the discretion of the Database Manager if in his/her mind it will take longer to determine if performance issues are corrected.

While on probation, an observers trips will not be counted towards the bonus days awards and will be treated by the FSB as training trips in their priority editing and review.

Decertification:

If there is no improvement in the observers performance during the three probationary trips, or at any time during the 3 month probationary period, the observer will be decertified by the Branch Chief in written notification to the Observer Contract COTR, the Program Manager and the observer of this decision.

Additionally an observer will automatically be decertified for failure to conform to the Standards of Conduct agreed to at the observers training class or if an individual has not performed as a certified observer in the Northeast Observer Program on a commercial fishing vessel in a one year period. The decertification procedure is subject to appeal in writing from the observer (or his representative) to the Branch Chief. The Branch Chief's determination of decertification is final.

Any observer that becomes decertified will be required to attend a complete observer training program for re-certification at the discretion of the Observer Service Provider and NMFS.